

Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

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R 011455Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8808

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 1985

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OEXC, BU

SUBJECT: US-BULGARIAN RELATIONS: LOOKING FOR IMPROVEMENT ON THE
CULTURAL FRONT

REF: A) SOFIA 1506; B) STATE 236630; C) STATE 136370; D) SOFIA 0960

1. WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER MLADENOV AUG 26 PRESSED FOR NEGOTIATION OF LONG-TERM AGREEMENTS ON COOPERATION SIMILAR TO THOSE THAT BULGARIA HAS WITH MOST OF OUR NATO ALLIES, I EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME BEFORE WE ARE ABLE TO OPERATE UNDER SUCH A FORMAL UMBRELLA BUT THAT MUCH COULD BE DONE EVEN WITHOUT AGREEMENTS. AS DEPT WILL RECALL (REF A), WHEN I THEN SAID OUR CULTURAL EXCHANGES ARE AT PRESENT ON A "PRIMITIVE" LEVEL, MLADENOV INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH ME AND "SET DOWN SOME POINTS WHICH WE (MEANING, EACH SIDE) SHALL CARRY OUT" WITHOUT ANY FORMAL UNDERTAKING. IN OTHER WORDS, HE INDICATED READINESS FOR A MODUS VIVENDI PENDING CONCLUSION OF A CULTURAL AGREEMENT OR AN OMNIBUS AGREEMENT ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES.

2. PROPERLY HANDLED, FOREGOING STATEMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER COULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LIMITED IMPROVEMENT ON THE CULTURAL FRONT. EVENTUALLY WE WILL HAVE TO NMDACY AN AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGES BECAUSE THAT IS THE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF OPERATING IN THE BULGARIAN ENVIRONMENT -- THE CONTENTS OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT BEING LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE FACT THAT IT PROVIDES AN UMBRELLA
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FOR BUREAUCRATS TO SHELTER UNDER ("UNDER WHAT AGREEMENT

IS HE COMING?" IS THE QUESTION WE ENCOUNTER WHEN WE REPORT AVAILABILITY OF A STAG OR VOLUNTARY SPEAKER OR SIMILAR EVENT); BUT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE SOME FURTHER LIMITED PROGRESS HERE PENDING CONCLUSION OF AN AGREEMENT.

3. THERE IS ONE PITFALL IN THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFER, IN THAT HE MAY SEEK TO ESTABLISH SOME KIND OF RECIPROCITY OR ONE-FOR-ONE RATION FOR ANYTHING WE MAY DO HERE; BUT AS EXPLAINED BELOW THIS CAN BE OVERCOME. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE THERE IS A WILLINGNESS TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE US AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON THE CULTURAL FRONT, AN INTEREST IN SHOWING THE EXHIBIT OF THRACIAN ART IN THE US. SINCE IT IS REPORTEDLY AN EXCELLENT EXHIBIT WHICH MIGHT COME IN ANY CASE, WE SHOULD USE OUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP FOR MAXIMUM NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE.

4. ACCORDINGLY, IF DEPT PERCEIVES NO OBJECTION I INTEND TO FOLLOW UP ON MLADENOV'S OFFER AND WILL TAKE THE FOLLOWING LINE, WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH REF B:

A. NOTE THE BULGARIAN INTEREST IN SHOWING THE EXHIBIT OF THRACIAN ART IN THE US AND SAY THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO FACILITATE THIS, ALTHOUGH UNDER OUR SYSTEM SPECIFIC DECISIONS WILL OF COURSE HAVE TO BE MADE BY INDIVIDUAL MUSEUMS. I WOULD OF COURSE GIVE BULGARIANS THE QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN REF C AND TREAT THIS MATTER AS AN ONGOING PROJECT WHICH, WHILE IT NO LONGER REQUIRES MLADENOV'S PERSONAL ATTENTION, REPRESENTS EVIDENCE OF OUR POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD CULTURAL EXCHANGES ON PRAGMATIC BASIS.

B. POINT OUT THAT THE BULGARIANS HAVE BEEN SHOWING ALL KINDS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE US WHILE THEY HAVE BEEN KEEPING US HERE AT ARM'S LENGTH. I WOULD CITE:
(1) BULGARIAN FILMS SHOWN AT PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVES;
(2) VISIT OF AVRAMOV QUARTET; (3) PARTICIPATION OF BULGARIAN ARTISTS AND MUSICOLOGISTS IN FOREIGN ARTISTS PROGRAM OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY; (4) CURRENT COMMERCIAL TOUR IN US OF DIMOV QUARTET; (5) COMMERCIAL TOUR BEING PLANNED FOR PIRIN FOLK ENSEMBLE; (6) EXHIBIT OF BULGARIAN TAPESTRY BEING ARRANGED FOR NEXT SPRING AT BARUCH
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CALLERY IN CHICAGO. SINCE THE BULGARIANS HAVE CONDUCTED OR ARE ABOUT TO CONDUCT SUCH ACTIVITIES IN OUR COUNTRY WITHOUT ANY INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT (WHICH UNDER OUR SYSTEM IS QUITE UNNECESSARY) IT IS ONLY FAIR TO EXPECT THEY WILL ALLOW US AT LEAST SOME CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IN BULGARIA. IN OTHER WORDS, RATHER THAN ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OR TABLE OR CHART IN TWO COLUMNS, I WOULD TRY TO ESTABLISH THE FACT THAT THE BULGARIANS OWE US SOMETHING.

C. TRY TO DEFLECT EFFORTS TO ADD TO THE BULGARIAN SIDE OF THEIR IMAGINARY LEDGER ON THE GROUNDS THAT IN OUR SOCIETY THEY ARE ALWAYS FREE TO PRESENT ANY CULTURAL OFFERING THEY LIKE AND FOR WHICH THERE IS INTEREST AND MONEY AVAILABLE; BUT WE DO NOT SUBSIDIZE FOREIGN CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS.

D. I WOULD ALSO RAISE CERTAIN OTHER MATTERS AS PER PARAS 7 AND 8 BELOW.

5. IF THE FOREGOING APPROACH SUCCEEDS IN MAKING A BREAK IN THE WALL THAT SURROUNDS US HERE, HOWEVER, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUT SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL THROUGH TO EXPLOIT THE OPENING TO BEST ADVANTAGE, PREFERABLY SOMETHING MAJOR WHICH REFLECTS THE EXCITING CREATIVITY OF PRESENT-DAY AMERICA. WE SHOULD HAVE NOT SOME LITTLE SHOW SEEN BY A FEW ARTISTS AND PASSERS-BY, BUT AN OCCASION TO WHICH WE CAN INVITE THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, EXPONENTS OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA, AS WELL AS OF THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY. THIS STRONGLY SUGGESTS A HIGH-QUALITY OFFERING IN THE PERFORMING ARTS REQUIRING A SEATED AUDIENCE AND WHICH WILL BE AN EVENT OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO SEND A SIGNAL DOWN THE LINE THAT AMERICAN CULTURAL OFFERINGS ARE NO LONGER TABOO.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8812

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 SOFIA 1985

6. IT WILL BE RECALLED (REF C) THAT THE BRITISH BROUGHT THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA HERE OUTSIDE OF ANY AGREEMENT, AS A "COMMERCIAL" PROPOSITION THOUGH OF COURSE WITH SOME HELP FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT. THE BULGARIANS HAVE EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN BEING ABLE TO HEAR (OR ONLY MEET) LEONTYNE PRICE, AND SHE KNOWS THIS AND

HAS NOT EXCLUDED THE POSSIBILITY. IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO BRING HER HERE FOR ONE OR TWO EVENINGS WE WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT KIND OF CURTAIN-RAISERS FOR AN AMERICAN CULTURAL PRESENCE IN BULGARIA. (LEONTYNE PRICE'S BUSINESS ADDRESS IS 1133 BROADWAY, NY, NY 10010, HER HOME ADDRESS 9 VAN DAM STREET, NY, NY 10013.) IF THIS OR ANOTHER NOTED AMERICAN STAR PERFORMER, BALLET GROUP, OR SIMILAR OFFERING OF TOP QUALITY (AND IN KEEPING WITH THE PREVAILING CONSERVATISM HERE, NOT TOO FAR-OUT), WERE AVAILABLE IN 1975, I THINK THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT MLADENOV WOULD ACCEPT SUCH AN EVENT, TO RIGHT WHAT I WOULD CALL THE IMBALANCE OF OUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP -- AND AS A GESTURE TOWARD THE UNITED STATES IN LINE WITH THE BULGARIAN DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

7. I WOULD ALSO TELL MLADENOV THAT MAKING AVAILABLE AN AMERICAN PROFESSOR TO TEACH AT SOFIA UNIVERSITY WOULD BE AN AMERICAN FORM OF ASSISTANCE TO BULGARIA AND NOT A PRIVILEGE; AND IN FACT THE FAILURE OF THE UNIVERSITY TWO YEARS AGO TO RENEW ARRANGEMENT FOR AN AMERICAN PROFESSOR WAS REGARDED BY US AS A RETROGRADE STEP, MORE IN KEEPING WITH THE COLD WAR THAN WITH THE SPIRIT OF OUR DEVELOPING FRIENDLY RELATIONS.
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8. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WOULD OF COURSE BE TO OBTAIN LOOSENING-UP NOT JUST FOR ONE LARGE PRESENTATION AND RETURN OF ONE PROFESSOR, BUT TO CREATE A BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR THE ENTIRE PROGRAM. EVEN UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER, NO MIRACLES CAN BE EXPECTED, AND THERE WILL BE NO OPPORTUNITY FOR ORDERLY PLANNING OF A CULTURAL PROGRAM HERE UNTIL WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT. EVEN SO, THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION APPEARS WORTH TRYING, AND BULGARIANS SEEM READY TO TALK BUSINESS.

9. VISIT OF YALE RICHMOND HERE IN LATE NOVEMBER WILL PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW UP AND TO SURVEY THE ENTIRE SITUATION WITH BULGARIANS WHO BY THAT TIME WILL HOPEFULLY HAVE RECEIVED AT LEAST AN AMBER LIGHT FROM MLADENOV.
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